

Partners in Diversity Workforce Diversity Project Community Meeting: Moving into Action

April 28, 2016



Finding Pathways to Professional and Updated Skills

Recertification

- Tuition Reimbursement | Need to get the word out about tuition reimbursement programs that already exist.
- Recertification Hotline | Start a recertification hotline with no-cost or low-cost resources on how to get recertified
- Resources for Comparing Credentials | Employers need resources on how to compare credentials internationally; need access to affordable and credible databases and/or community organizations
- Experience, Rather than Certification | A nurse with an associate's degree and 20 years of experience should be equivalent to nurse with a bachelor's degree and 1 year of experience; employers need to be more flexible; employers should invest in an interested employee and work with under qualified people to bring them up to speed. That way, they create a loyal employee who will recommend them. Degree requirements should be substituted with certification tests. Portland Parks and Recreation does not ask for transcripts; instead, prospective hires need to explain their experience.
- Aptitude Tests | Need to make the aptitude tests more widely available; we need some kind of certification test that demonstrates that you have the skill to perform the job in spite of not having a recognized a degree
 - Workforce Oregon and Oregon Employment Division | Provide a skills-based test that individuals may take; companies such as PGE look at the results from this test, rather than degrees, when interviewing which increases opportunities for disenfranchised communities to be hired
- Acceleration Programs
 - Portland Community College | Career Pathways Program offers certificates (6 months-1 year) that count towards the completion of a two-year degree at PCC. This program trains and gives students/job seekers an expedited way to gather skills, in order to get in-demand, living wage jobs. The Adult Basic Skills Program (ABS) caters to students of color, first generation college students, students who test lower in writing and math, GED students, and students from lower socio-economic levels. These services are available on all campuses (four full-service campuses district-wide). Services are also available statewide at Mount Hood Community College, Umpqua Community College, etc. These programs are cohort-based; once students identify which program they go into, they are placed into a cohort as a best practice to serve first generation students and students of color, who tend to flourish in a community environment. Cohort models and pairing models that foster a sense of camaraderie and shared experience are key.
 - Mount Hood Community College | Had/has a program for Mexican nurses with healthcare degrees, duration 2-3 years
 - Clackamas Community College | Has an accelerated program for foreign nurses who want to receive training and accreditation to work in the U.S.
 - Worksystems, Inc. | Just received a grant to help immigrants to get into the healthcare field. In this program, there were 4 or 5 participating hospitals. They used existing employees that were in those industries, but in other areas. We reviewed their backgrounds to see if they were able to succeed through aptitude tests. They were paid to leave work and go to school full time for 15 months. Many of them as much as doubled their salary. The money from the grant allowed us to bring in a new cohort of people into the accelerated program.

- State of Oregon | The State of Oregon faced a shortage of skilled workers during the Y2K crisis. Hospitals faced a bilingual nurse shortage so the State trained employees and paid them full-time to become nurses, to fill gaps in the bilingual, bi-cultural job market. It is not a case of finding bilingual nurses in the community, but rather taking the initiative and creating them. The state released their staff to train as nurses part-time and get RN degrees in about 18 months. Computer programmers went through full-time training and were paid full-time by the state, which in some cases doubled their salary.
- IMPRINT | A federal task force that helps immigrant professionals and foreign-educated individuals get into the workforce
- Boot Camps | Need to create workforce education opportunities in understaffed fields (e.g., CNA, voting specialists, accountants) and fund pathways for individuals to get recertified in as little as 10-18 months. We could partner with banks in the region to develop boot camps that educate applicants, with 80% recruitment from the camps to banks.
- Cohort Models |
- Reciprocal Licensing | The state board is responsible for licensing, investigating how commissioners could open up reciprocal licensing opportunities and look more carefully at approving licenses for high-need industries. We are working with CIO (next session 2017) to figure out which organizations would be willing to continue to advocate and have a legislative push.
- Provisional Hiring | IRCO tries to help immigrants get their foreign degrees recognized (especially in the healthcare field), but funding is not forthcoming. Need to develop a hiring program that lets people with foreign degrees get hired provisionally while their degrees are transferred
- Demos | Need to request demos, rather than resumes and cover letters. Better to assess if people can actually do the job, are familiar with the tools. There is a demo test for carpenters, maintenance mechanics, utility workers, etc. Not the case for licensed trades (electrician, etc.)

Driver's License

- Driver's Education Classes | City of Portland and Portland Police Bureau program – East Portland Action Plan Meeting – is a series of driver's education classes taught in multiple languages.
- Access to Vehicle | Need to connect with community organizations to see if they have program to offer cars or to obtain driver's licenses.

Employment Gaps

- Resume Gaps | Resume gaps should not always be considered negative; people have things that come up, we all do, it should be overlooked
- Background Checks
 - NW Natural | Does a background checks to *verify* employment
- Drug Tests
 - PGE | More applicants need to be made aware that UA is a requirement.
 - Urban League of Portland | We have to teach people to use other avenues to take care of issues rather than self-medicating, we have to be creative.

Finding Local Job Market Opportunities

Recruitment Goals

- Funding | Employers need to invest more in recruitment. This will help more people to get jobs and will improve employee/employer relations, in addition to the quality of training/hiring programs. Training and education costs need to be absorbed by employers, rather than prospective employees. In order to receive grant funding from the government, employees need to collect and provide metrics and implementation plans.
- Quotas | If employers have a quota to meet for hiring certain demographics, that data must be tracked and, in turn, incorporated into the hiring process. Search criteria and wording need to be adjusted to meet that demographic need.
- Target Audience | Need to target people who need services, but might not be identified as such. Need clarification on what communities are or are not connected to certain types of jobs or industry opportunities.

Promoting Jobs

- Community Organizations
 - Community Centers | In NE Portland, community centers are open from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. A great resource.
 - Libraries | Employers need to establish connections with libraries. Could become a new pathway for recruitment.
 - Local Businesses | Grocery stores, churches, barber shops; perhaps the State could provide incentives to local businesses and community facilities to post information about job opportunities.
 - Schools | Impact NW connects with parents through their children's schools. Employers should attend these programs and let parents know about opportunities.
 - Powwows and Cultural Events | Central Oregon Youth Conservation Corps created a labor crew for forestlands and grasslands, funded by AmeriCorps. They recruited Native American youth from the community to organize a project. The labor crew elected to help setup the powwow for a diverse group who was very interested in learning about the community. Powwows are opportunities to build cultural awareness. We should inform employers about these community events to educate the local population about job opportunities.
 - Job Fairs and Networking Events | Urban League's Good in the Hood, Juneteenth, and job fair at the Double Tree (over 800 participants) are good opportunities to meet the community of color, meet people in their neighborhoods. More individuals of color need to participate in networking events. Employers need to leverage their internal network and set up more job fairs for friends and family.
- Career Counseling | Communities of color need long-term career support
 - College Partnerships | At OHSU and PSU, students are trained on how to enter their desired field. With support from HR staff, individuals are able to get their foot into the door and then identify opportunities to move up in their field. Employers need to develop partnerships with colleges to promote opportunities for higher-level positions because students may not be able to quit school for internship opportunities; they need to make a higher wage. Integrating these opportunities into curriculum may help. Instead of filling seats in a classroom, counselors need to think about filling specific jobs (i.e., take class A, learn skill A, then you can do this job and put A on your resume).
- Community Representatives | Rather than limiting one's outreach to career fairs and similar community events, businesses need to maximize their appeal by making meaningful connections with individual recruiters. They need to partner with community representatives who will, in turn, educate and train community members on how to secure jobs. The best way to transform negative perceptions about communities of color, and businesses alike, is to meet one-on-one (e.g., over coffee). This builds trust and promotes word-of-mouth advertising. Community representatives can also be trained as recruiters. If employers had access to a list of community representatives, they would be more successful in connecting to and recruiting employees from communities of color.
 - IRCO | Hires "aunties and uncles" as staff so they can serve the community the way they would anyway, but be connected to wider opportunities and resources.
- New Hires | Until someone from a community goes into a new occupation and succeeds and then returns to the community with that knowledge and experience, there is very little crossover, there is no permeable membrane. New hires can be a valuable recruitment resource; tap into their network of former colleagues and poach from other companies.
- Sponsored Job Visits | More colleges need to sponsor job visits (e.g., Columbia Sportswear). Businesses should bring prospective employees to their offices to meet – rather than telling people about jobs, you can show them. This is especially relevant for skilled trades, construction, electric, etc.
- Presentations | Need to recruit people in City Bureaus to come to PCC Workforce classes and talk to students about employment opportunities
- Local Media and New Media | Need to advertise on community TV channels and radio stations because not everyone is Internet savvy or plugged into their community events calendar. Radio, website, and social media (e.g., LinkedIn) are being ignored by employers using old fashion ways of informing citizens like meetings. Radio and TV ads are essential in educating the public about jobs available. Need to leverage ethnic publications, such as the Chinese Times, which reaches thousands.

- Staffing Agencies | Need to pair employers with staffing agencies who know the individual or cohort and can help bridge the gap to bring the potential employees up to speed. Could reach out to employers to help them see hiring through agencies as a safe option for recruitment.
- Mutual Assistance Agencies | Already exist; Pros: prospective employees do get assistance; Cons: they can find themselves stuck in a narrow stream (i.e., it is hard for people to imagine themselves doing what they have never seen done; “cells” can help community workers to connect to specific ethnic streams)
- Advancing the Under-Employed | Need to think more critically about advancing the under-employed – individuals who have a work history and soft skills. As they advance, they make room for new workers at the bottom. That way, they can advance within the company they are already in, which benefits the company.
 - CPT Program | Trains people to be a little more than entry-level and to have soft skills, which appeals to employers because they know they are getting workers who have a level of dedication.

Overreliance on Community Organizations

- Partnerships with CBOs and Employers | Social workers working with job seekers need to know what prerequisites the seeker needs to apply. Communication between COBs and potential employers is key.

Lack of Awareness of Existing Services and Resources

Workforce Expectations

- Apprenticeships
 - Oregon Tradeswomen | Women who graduated from Oregon Tradeswomen did much better than the women who did not go through the pre-apprenticeship program; we need to get community members into the recruiting meetings for these programs in order to communicate what various trades entail so people know where their interests lie and can be more successful in their training. Similar programs from Constructing Hope and Portland Youth Builders. A phenomenal auto mechanic program in Aloha.
 - TriMet | Has an apprenticeship program for mechanics
 - NW Natural | Wants to set up some kind of apprenticeship program where workers spend a few months in different sections of the company, thus enriching whole workforce and enabling workers to see multiple options without leaving the company. How to build the pipeline coming in? Perhaps meeting with other groups, (high schools, staffing agencies, IRCO) and bringing people in for tours that end with an opportunity to apply.
- Internships | Internships give prospective employees a chance to demonstrate their abilities and expose prospective employees to workplace culture to help them make informed career decisions.
 - Portland Water Bureau | Created an internship to bridge gap between the up-coming workers and the more skilled jobs, thus creating more entry-level positions to help bridge the gap. Employers should bring in teams of interns, who know each other and learn the job as peers, before the job opens and they apply for them.
- Job Shadowing | Employers should physically bring people to a facility and let them walk around and truly understand a day in the life of an engineer, etc.
- Mentorship | A first generation college graduate may not have anyone to talk to about their academic goals or experiences within their family or personal network; need strong mentorship programs that walk a person through applying for a single position all the way through their career.

Workers' Rights and Self-Advocacy

- Overcoming Insecurities | Many immigrants have problems getting information and are challenged by insecurity which prevents them from asking for services, searching for resources. Employers face the same insecurity; both parties need to overcome.
- Ongoing Support | Need more opportunities for employees to support one another. Employers need to convey to workers that there are pathways to success so they know what is possible.
- Unions | Do people from other countries understand unions? Do they join them? Unions may have to contend with workers' fear of documentation or reprisal. Union programs have apprenticeship coordinators who do training and place people. They should liaise with heads of local trades and manufacturing sectors

who know more about their needs. Should also reach out to new members with specific questions about cultural barriers.

Job Preparedness

- Resume Training | Need to bring volunteers into colleges to teach resume writing
 - Kaiser | Has a talent acquisition team that outreaches and provides information and resume classes to people of color. Retention is not an issue after this great outlay of resources. Need training on how to write specific resumes, based on trade.
 - City of Portland | Offers open training for interviewing and resume writing
 - Urban League of Portland | Tells candidates about resume writing resources at orientation
- Soft Skill Training | Need to teach workers the importance of fit and how to achieve it (e.g., understanding work appropriate attire, attitude, being on time). Job seekers who are minimally qualified are going to wind up at the end of a long line of more qualified applicants. They need to be well educated in soft skills, interviewing, accentuating their good points, etc.

Childcare

- Opportunities | Need more onsite childcare for employees
- Reimbursement | All day kindergarten facilitations are currently in place. Employers should reimburse students and trainees for childcare. Attendance will go up, which benefits both employers and prospective employees.

Cultural Awareness and Language Difficulties

Human Resources Training

- Diversity Owned by the Top | Those who understand the value of diversity in the workplace need to lead by example. Businesses need more information on how to train their employees (at all levels) to promote diversity. For example, the best way to get an individual of color healthcare is to be informed by someone who speaks his or her language.
- Vernacular around Diversity | Need to develop a better vernacular around diversity; need to provide more comprehensive training to employers. For example, an eight-hour training for a police officer is not enough time for him or her to become culturally aware.
- Cultural Differences as Value-Add | Coming from a different country should be perceived as a value add. In the U.S. we often look at it as a negative. We should instead seek understanding and learn about where people come from. Need to work with managers by recognizing their problems and goals and showing them how the immigrant/refugee community might solve/meet their needs.
- Training Programs
 - City of Portland | Trains all of its employees, creating cultural awareness among managers and supervisors; have to get through the interview to get to the next level or get the job; given 12 months to get everyone through it.
- Application Screening
 - Removing Names | A diversity committee asked that the names be removed from the applications in order to create a more neutral perception. This is impossible to do with existing online application systems; perhaps this could change.
 - Applicant Sorting Programs | Computer programs exist that help categorize applicants by the criteria employers are looking for to eliminate bias. Not many currently use these programs, but more should.
 - Interview Training | Interview techniques need to adapt to reflect cultural differences. Bias has to be eliminated from the interviewing teams. Interviewers should be shown a “video” of their counterparts in other companies to see how their performance differs.
 - Screening Committees | People should serve on a screening committee at their own organization, giving them an idea of how to apply for internal positions and an insight into what applications look like from immigrant and refugee minority jobseekers. This would also teach them how men and women answer questions differently and how your own lenses influence your bias, how you screen in

or out other applicants, etc. Individuals will also gain a better understanding of different cultural and ethnic groups' approaches to the application process.

- Power and Positionality | If you are a manager and you come to speak at one of these sessions, you have a certain influence simply because of your position. Be aware of who is presenting the information.
- "Bringing More In" | Need more individuals of color to provide input so that no one individuals experiences pressure (e.g., the pressure of people thinking that you know everything about your community) or burnout (e.g., being placed on every panel, every interview).
- Online Application Process | The NEO GOV online application process is a barrier. If you want to work for the City of Portland or TriMet, you have to apply through NEO GOV. The City of Portland HR does training to help applicants improve their resumes. There is also a desk that has a facilitator to assist people through the process. PGE does not see this technical issue as much with younger applicants, but instead with older applicants. Need more in-school training to assist with websites and how to be prepared.

Job Post Framing

- Job Requirements | Need to look at application processes where the employer has chance to change the interaction. Does the job actually need a cover letter and a resume? Does asking for it limit your applicant pool? Need to match application process to the job. One size does not fit all.
- Job Descriptions | Jobs change on site, but job descriptions calcify in old forms. The job we advertise for may not be the job we need. Overly precise and lofty job descriptions scare people off in the application phase.
- Inclusive Language | In order to be inclusive of all minority groups that may not have the qualifications, or understand the terminology used to delineate qualifications in a job post, employers need to consider the perspective of minority applicants when framing job descriptions. Employers need to better convey what they are looking for in an employee. Diversity regulations in the hiring process (among hiring panels) need to be enforced, not just encouraged.
 - Minimum Qualifications | A lot of public jobs include "minimum qualifications," which could be taken very literally. If the post says "two years" and people are adding up months and find that they come in technically under qualified, they might self-exclude themselves from that opportunity based on the framing. There are discrepancies between how men and women perceive job posts as well. Women are more likely to pass up a job listing if they don't meet every single requirement, whereas if men meet three of them they will probably apply. Add the additional filter of women of color. How does the language make them view themselves in those positions? Refugee women of color might self-select more rigorously.
 - Transferable Skills | "Transferable skills" is confusing. How far back into their work history can they go? In an African country, "transferable skills" literally means transferring something. "Hard skills, soft skills," the language is very ambiguous if literally translated by an ELL. Can you drive a car? Are you good with people? Do you know how to type? We need to clarify this type of literal framing.
 - Nomenclature and Acronyms: In the trades sector, there is a difference in nomenclature from east to west coast, from north to south. When individuals take aptitude tests, some are able to pick up local nomenclature, but many are lost. Key words that might confuse a job seeker tend to create a blind spot. It is important that HR recruiters catch such things. Acronyms are also problematic. The City of Portland does not use city acronyms in job posts. We need to screen written materials with a community member of color present.
- Real World Applications | For example, "ways to get this experience include volunteering with your church group, etc." If you give examples, people can see themselves in that role. Parks department, for example, will have sessions with a hiring manager or someone actively in the department, and will outline a typical day to give people the ability to see themselves in that job. Reading it on a page does not allow them to visualize their role in that place.
- Video Introductions | Perhaps make video vignettes in which people in the job already introduce it briefly (i.e., this is a video of people in a foundry who will explain what they are doing)
 - Madden Industrials | Shows videos to people before even offering them the options; requires a tour before they start training; videos should reflect the population you want to attract. If you want female electricians, have a woman in the video so people can imagine themselves in the role.

- Informational Sessions | City of Portland has informational sessions just focused on how to look for and apply for jobs – demystifying job postings for community members, helping them extract the information needed to make them a competitive candidate.

ESL Programs

- City of Gresham and City of Beaverton | Offer English classes, but are looking for ways to better promote these opportunities. It would also be great to know if there are individuals or businesses willing to invest in ESL and language lessons; if there is already something working within different communities.
- People, Places, Things | Provides industry-specific English classes
- Multnomah County Library | One employee at the library was originally hired to shelve books, but there was a shift in his position and he now has to interact with patrons. The library pays for him to take the free ESL classes at the library and has placed him at a desk with another Korean speaker who speaks better English.
- Onsite Opportunities | In construction, you must have a command of the language to protect yourself and co-workers. You are in a different location every day and need to be able to communicate with other tradesmen. Need more onsite opportunities for ESL, need mentors or foremen to facilitate.
- ESL for Job Preparedness | Need more English classes for communication skills, mock interview skills, and self-presentation during an interview. Language barriers may force students/trainees to be placed in classes that are below their skill level, just because they cannot speak English. We need to be cognizant of this, perhaps offer more levels of preparedness classes.
- Technical English | Need a bigger budget for technical English; classes need to focus on work-related language. ESL teachers do not necessarily know the language of the trades. They need to work with employers in order to build their trade vocabulary.

Interpreters

- Certification | Need more competent and culturally conscious interpreters. There are state and local certifications for interpreters, but people are doing it without proper training. A lack of training leads to miscommunication and misunderstanding the results in lower fees, but horror stories. Perhaps the certification process needs to be reviewed, a common standard needs to be set. More healthcare providers need to provide in-house training, internal acceleration programs, for entry-level and above interpreters.

Bilingual Resources

- Bilingual Employees | At PGE, we have employees that can speak different languages. In the call center you have to speak English, but we do have people who speak Spanish, and we have employees who can speak to customers who also speak Spanish.
- Rosetta Stone | Available on phones, \$250/year license, some colleges has bought licenses for students

Requested from Attendees:

- Create an email group; have access to list of who was represented at this meeting
- Create a list of people to call within diverse communities
- Create a list of contact people from businesses who can help
- Create a list or map of where to go for employment opportunities. If this project is serious about building those lasting relationships, then we need to create some type of inventory reserved for business distributors.
- Leverage college students to support this work; many are working on similar issues in their academic projects and theses